

Arkansans Helped Prepare Castro Foes For Cuban Invasion

Several Arkansans helped train personnel involved in the recent counterrevolutionary invasion of Cuba, the Democrat has learned. Although all have military backgrounds, they participated in the training on a "soldier of fortune" basis, the source explained.

Exactly how many Arkansans were involved could not be determined. One report was that 16 participated in various specialties of training.

At least four fliers from the Little Rock area went to Central America last August and returned to Arkansas a few weeks ago, the source reported.

"All of them have been in the active reserve," the source said, adding that the men were "released from whatever reserve or military status" they held during their participation in the training.

"They resigned their status," he said, "and went down there and started training Cubans and Central Americans as an invasion force."

The four Arkansans that the source told about were involved directly in training fliers, the source said. The planes they used were jets—T-33's and F-80's. Both types are old U.S. models. The Arkansans were slated to participate with their trainees directly in the invasion, the source said, and in fact were waiting off the Cuban coast with other fliers and planes aboard an aircraft carrier during the attempt to wrest Cuba from Castro. But the order to begin air support was never given.

According to the source, he was told that if air support had been given as scheduled, the invasion likely would have succeeded.

The T-33's, not combat planes in design, had been modified to carry machine guns and cannon, according to the source, and the planes were painted grey without insignia for the invasion.

The planes were supposed to make preliminary runs to soften up the area and prepare it for bombing runs and ground assaults.

The carrier loaded with aircraft headed to its appointed spot, the source said, adding that a B-26 was also a part of the invasion plan. This was a particular B-26, he explained, one that was used by the Arkansas National Guard before it was disposed of as a surplus item.

It had lost its National Guard identity a year before, he said.

According to the source, "they (the Arkansans, other fliers, planes etc.) moved out to their battle point and just sat there throughout the invasion."

"They weren't ordered to strafe the beaches or anything."

"This invasion force just went in while they sat there watching. The invasion force was on the beaches 36 hours, the underground they were expecting met and joined them but for some reason their supplies were never unloaded."

"At the end of 36 hours, Castro broke loose with less than 40 tanks, and immediately captured or killed the entire invasion force except those who got into their boats and came out."

"After the invasion fizzled, it was known that apparently Castro had the complete battle plan before the invaders ever landed."

"The commander of the invasion force was supposed to give the signal for the planes to go in. It still isn't known why it wasn't given. They could have gone in and eliminated Castro and taken charge without any trouble."

According to the source, the Arkansans men were employees of the Cuban government-in-exile when they helped train the invaders.

"Some were from Texas, others from North Dakota," the source said, adding there were probably other states in addition to these two and Arkansas represented among the training personnel.

The Democrat contacted one of the men who reportedly helped in the training of the Cuban invaders. He quickly denied any knowledge of the matter.

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